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AUTHOR Heaney, Barbara M.
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ABSTRACT

Drawing from data collected by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges (CSCC), this paper discusses the issue of community college student transfer, describes the CSCC's role in promoting a definition of transfer that would provide a reasonable definition of "transfer students" and that would result in the ability to provide consistent and comparable transfer data, review preliminary findings, and highlight particularly successful transfer programs. After introductory comments underscore the need for community colleges to improve their record in helping minority students transfer to four-year institutions, the paper reviews the CSCC's efforts to obtain nationwide transfer data. This section discusses the CSCC's transfer indicator and the rationale for limiting "transfer students" to those first-time community college students who complete at least 12 transferrable credits and take at least one four-year college course. After presenting preliminary CSCC data on transfer rates, indicating that only 21.4% of all students who earn 12+ credits at a community college eventually transfer, and that rates for Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians are even lower, the paper highlights exceptional transfer rates and some institutional factors that might be associated with them. Next, brief descriptions are provided of the Ford Southwest Transfer Educational Research Project, the success of tribal colleges in promoting transfer among American Indians, and the Urban Demonstration Model. Elements common to all three models are identified. Concluding comments stress the importance of continuing efforts to improve and evaluate the community college transfer function. (JMC)

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A Look At Transfer Rates
And Programs Which Promote Transfer
In American Community Colleges

by

Barbara M. Heaney

March 1991

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Americans often accord people with substantial formal schooling more respect on first meeting than those who have received less. Our economy requires a literate work force and our political system functions most effectively when policy is initiated by a thinking electorate and when that policy is administrated by educated representatives. To date, the majority of degree receipients have been white college students. Until recently this was cause for concern only from an ideological perspective among those who believe that all people are created equal and are entitled as citizens of the United States to equitable educational opportunities. Because of the guarenteed change in the general population, educational attainment for minority students can no longer be just an ideological concern. From a purely pragmatic perspective it is high time to vigorusly pursue the path of quality education and degree attainment for all Americans.

The percentage of minority students age 18-25 will increase dramatically during the next quarter century, as the percentage of white students decreases. Approximately 25% of the college age population is Alaska Native, American Indian, Black, Latino, Hawaiian and Asian American. "...By about 2020, one-third of the nation will be minority. Between 1968 and 1986 the number of White school children fell by 16 percent, the number of Black children increased by 5% and the number of Hispanic children by 100 percent." (MIT p11) Therefore, the percentage of minority students receiving post-secondary degrees should increase significantly.

Current statistics indicate that the number of minority students receiving bachelor's degrees has indeed increased. However, minority "enrollment in education increased just 8%. For Black students enrollment actually declined..." (MIT p11) These increases are not keeping pace with the shift in the population. Only about 14% of the college-age, minority population is enrolled in college.

Since its inception, the community college system has taken an active role in the education of minority students. Enrollment in a community college is the first step toward an academic degree for 43% of the total population. (Chronicle, pA36) 50.4% of all non-white undergraduates beging their college experience here. 53.7% of all American Indian undergraduates are enrolled at a community college as are 41.8% Blacks, 56.4% Latino, 40% Asian Americans, and 36% Whites. There is no reason to believe that this pattern will change in the next 50 years. It is important then to look at this system and its role in promoting transfer to four-year institutions.

ESTABLISHING A TRANSFER RATE:

The Federal government does not collect statistics regarding the transfer of community college students to four-year institutions. Some state governments do but each state defines transfer differently, making comparisons unreliable. The same is true for data gathered and published by individual institutions. Aware of the inherent incompatibility of these data The Ford Foundation contracted The Center for the Study of Community

Colleges (CSCC) to develope a workable definition of transfer for collecting data nationally. An indicator of transfer rate was defined as

> "All students entering in a given year who have no prior college experience, who stay at the community college long enough to complete at least twelve transferrable credits and who take one or more classes at the university or four-year baccalaureate institution within four years." (Brawer, p1).

Data was collected according to this definition in 1988, as a pilot, and in 1989 and 1990. This is the first set of nationally gathered transfer data. Most community colleges with minority enrollment of 20% or greater were asked in 1990 to participate in this study. Of approximately 250 invitees 76 colleges have responded and at least 35 more are expected to respond before the project deadline of May 15, 1991. This is a 44.4% response rate. (Cohen, 1991)

There were several reasons for the requirements delineated in the definition of this transfer rate. Data sets were limited to first time entrants to prevent the counting of students who had already attended four-year institutions, and in many cases received degrees, and who are currently enrolled at the community college solely for one or two specific courses. The requirement that students take a course at a four-year institution within four years was made because not all who enter community colleges want to eventually get a bachelor's degree. Many want to obtain a

technical certificate, retrain or update job skills, improve basic skills, acquire a job skill, or take and odd course or two.

It is very difficult to decide who should be counted. Often students start with one intention and because of circumstances they change their mind along the way. Many students find themselves at a community college because it is an open access institution with relatively low costs, good hours and conveniently located. It does not matter if they performed well in high school. It does not matter if they fulfilled their general requirements in high school or even received a diploma. Many students are unsure of their academic ability and need time to grow as students and investigate academic/career options. Others want a BA but can not make the time or financial commitment required to start a four-year BA program. If after receiving an AA time and money permit they will continue on. The structure of the community college makes enrollment possible for the 'marginal' student.

If you count every student that enrolls at the community college you get a false reading because included in that number are also degreed students who wish to take an art, photography, language, tax, or auto mechanic class. If you count only those students who expressed an interest in transfer upon entering you fail to count many students who do not realize that a BA might be an option for them. If you count only those with "academic potential" as determined by SAT scores, placement scores, or high school GPAs you miss many students who are academic "late bloomers". Frequently test-poor high school students need only the

opportunity, the encouragement and a new, positive environment to blossom.

SOME NUMBERS:

A look at the preliminary data obtained by CSCC gives us some idea just how many community college students actually transfer to four-year institutions.

Line one, below, represents all students who enrolled at the community college in a given year (1986). We have established that not all these students wish at this point or will ever wish at some future point to transfer to a four-year institution. These students necessarily should not be included when trying to determine a college's transfer rate.

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
25,550	19,950	1,076	60,879	7,082	1,981

Line two, below, represents all students who enrolled in a given year and have continued on to complete 12 or more college credits. Twelve credits is only four courses. Hopefully this figure gives a realistic base from which to assess the transfer rate. CSCC feels that little "cooling out" takes place between entering and receiving 12 credits.

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
12,616	10,803	470	26,882	4,256	824

The real curiosity is what happens between line two and line three. Line three, below, represents all students who entered in

a given year, received 12 or more credits and within a four-year period arrived at a four-year institution to take classes.

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
2,355	1,828	74	6,447	1,136	126

FORD FOUNDATION/CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
1991 TRANSFER ASSEMBLY RESPONSE FORM

	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Asian	Other	Total
Line 1:	25550	19950	1076	60879	7082	1981	116518
Line 2:	12616	10803	470	26882	4256	824	55851
Line 3:	2355	1828	74	6447	1136	126	11966

Total raw data for respondents. N = 76

	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Asian	Other	Total
C/E	49.4%	54.2%	43.7%	44.2%	60.1%	41.6%	47.9%
T/C	18.7%	16.9%	15.7%	24.0%	26.7%	15.3%	21.4%
T/E	9.2%	9.2%	6.9%	10.6%	16.0%	6.4%	10.3%

	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Asian	Other	Total
Line 1:	18538	18684	986	54010	6145	1759	100122
Line 2:	9011	10142	429	23557	3722	764	47625
Line 3:	2082	1737	70	5791	1014	116	10810

Total raw data for respondents. N = 65

	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Asian	Other	Total
C/E	48.6%	54.3%	43.5%	43.6%	60.6%	43.4%	47.6%
T/C	23.1%	17.1%	16.3%	24.6%	27.2%	15.2%	22.7%
T/E	11.2%	9.3%	7.1%	10.7%	16.5%	6.6%	10.8%

Line 1: Total number of entrants
Line 2: Total number of entrants who obtained 12+ credits
Line 3: Total number of entrants who obtained 12+ credits and transfered to a four-year institution

Credits/entrants: Percent of entrants who completed 12+ credits
Transfers/credits: Percent of 12+ credit holders who transfer
Transfers/entrants: Percent of entrants with 12+ credits who transfer

The following figures are the percentage of entrants who have received 12+ credits, some times referred to as 'credits/entrants':

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
49.4%	54.2%	43.7%	44.2%	60.1%	41.6%

Notice the rate of persistance from entering to receiving 12+ credits. 47.9% of all entrants continue long enough to get 12+ credits. Considering the multitude of missions of any community college this is a good rate. Black, Latino, and Asian American students are above the average. Curiously, Latinos, who are frequently categorized as lacking persistance are well above the average.

Unfortunately from the perspective of retention and transfer, something dramatic happens between the point of receiving 12+ credits and showing up at the four-year institution. Many possible explainations have been put forth. For some, it is financial necessity which terminates a college career before receiving a bachelor's degree. For others it is a lack of ability. Many others have been cooled out, talked out, guided out or pressured out by well intentioned and not always so well intentioned college counselors, instructors, spouses, family members, work supervisors, friends, and miscellaneous others. Still others find that their earning power has increased as a result of their community college experience and immediate considerations far outweigh the sacrifices needed to achieve the long range goal of receiving a bachelor's degree.

Whatever the reasons, the overall results are not good from the point of view of minority communities who want to share in the educational benefits of their nation and from the perspective of a nation who looks to these students as a source of future leadership in both economics and governance. Only 21.4% of all students who earn 12+ credits at a community college eventually transfer to a four-year institution.

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
18.7%	16.9%	15.7%	24.0%	26.7%	15.3%

Many papers have been written on why black, Latino, and American Indian students do not succeed at the same rates as their white classmates. This paper will not review that material. Rather it will look at what some colleges with high minority student enrollment are doing to promote transfer to baccalaureate programs.

It is very important when looking at CSCC's data to keep in mind the fact that this is nationally collected data. Although each college submitted data according to the same defintion, there exists great diversity within the 76 colleges represented. A sample of some individual colleges:

College	Black	Hispanic	American Indian	White	Asian American	Other	Total
1	14	7	18	17	16	13	15
2	28	30	-	30	33	-	28
3	0	9	3	21	0	18	15
4	75	-	-	-	-	-	75
5	51	48	100	57	0	100	55
6	8	9	50	9	9	-	17
7	-	35	-	-	-	-	35
8	4	3	25	14	7	0	5
9	-	-	59	100	-	-	65
10	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
11	9	0	0	28	0	0	17
12	38	21	36	33	26	0	30

* Figures provided by the Center for the Study of Community Colleges must remain unidentified. These data were provided in March of 1991.

The numbers alone are deceptive. College #6, for instance only has three American Indian students but it has three hundred black students. On the other hand, #9 is 80% American Indian. More important than trying to develop a national picture is the task of looking at individual colleges or regions to see why they are so different.

Group A: totals for 65 colleges

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
48.6%	54.3%	43.5%	43.6%	60.6%	43.4%
23.1%	17.1%	16.3%	24.6%	27.2%	15.2%

Group B: totals for 76 colleges

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
49.4%	54.2%	43.7%	44.2%	60.1%	41.6%
18.7%	16.9%	15.7%	24.0%	26.7%	15.3%

The addition of eleven colleges from one major city dramatically shifted these data. Are community colleges as a unit doing a deplorable job helping students transfer to bachelor's degree programs, as many critics argue, or are some colleges, some districts, or some regions doing a commendable job while others are not?

For 50% of all non-white undergraduate students transfer from a community college to a four-year institution is the only way to pursue a bachelor's degree. Looking at the data collected by CSCC on a college by college bases it becomes clear that some colleges are in fact doing an excellent job promoting transfer.

THE SUCCESSES

A private college in Kansas transfers 50% of its black students who obtain 12+ credits. Black enrollment is 72% of total enrollment.

A public college in North Carolina sees 30% of its black students and 34% of the white students with 12+ credits transfer. In a follow-up interview, the Transfer Coordinator stated that these students transfer into the last semester of sophomore year or directly into the junior year. The college is in the same city as the state university with whom they have a very tight articulation agreement. The two colleges work closely to develop complementary programs. The community college provides the exact general college requirements needed at the local university and helps students prepare for the liberal arts program, one of two education programs, the School of Business, or a variety of technical programs.

Two border colleges in Texas stand out. In both cases, over 80% of their entrants are Latino. And in both cases 30% of these students obtaining 12+ credits transfer.

A tribal college in Montana has a transfer rate of 65%. American Indians represent 80% of the total enrollment.

In Mississippi one of the public community colleges with 99% black student enrollment has a transfer rate of 75%. The Dean of Admissions is personally involved in counselling transfer candidates. Each November the community college sponsors a career day. It is an opportunity for first semester sophomores to meet

with representatives from both universities and colleges, and to meet with representatives of local businesses. The community college works closely with the state four-year institutions. Their curriculum is streamlined to fit university requirements. Students frequently bring letters from four-year institutions they wish to attend which clearly outline the necessary course requirements for transfer. The community college works very closely with each individual student and with the four-year institution to ensure that students are prepared. This transfer program has been in effect for at least twelve years. Personal attention and genuine concern seem to be the corner stone of this program.

A public, community college in Colorado whose student body is 42% non-white has the following transfer rate:

Black	Hispanic	Ame Indian	White	Asian Ame	Other
41%	26%	18%	17%	24%	12%

According to their Transfer Coordinator, a major feature of their success with black and Latino students is the result of serious high school recruitment efforts. The community college works closely with local high schools to target students early and to provide them with the necessary academic counselling even before entering the community college. This college also works very closely with the state college and university. All three institutions are located on the same campus. Students at the community college, at the four-year college and at the university are strongly encouraged to participate in the inter-institutional

programs they sponsor. These programs provide community college students the opportunity to begin taking courses at one of the four-year institutions. Credits are applied to their two year program. This community college is working closely with both the local high schools and the four-year state institutions.

CSCC was able to obtain data from a community college in Puerto Rico. The college's enrollment is 100% Latino. Their transfer rate is 35%.

PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE TRANSFER

Aside from these individual examples, some successful programs are known to exist and can be used as models among colleges with similar characteristics. The first is "The Ford Southwest Transfer Educational Research Project" (Rendor, et al, 1988) which studied transfer within the Border College Consortium (BCC) in Texas. Rendor believes that promoting transfer within predominately Latino communities requires as much community college <--> community interaction as it does community college <--> four-year instititution interaction. In order to promote and increase transfer, Border colleges must maintain strong articulation agreements with four-year instituions. They must also work to educate the students and their families who frequently "exhibit a naivete about the costs and benefits of the higher education system..." (Rendor, p158) They strongly encourage Border colleges to develop strong, visible transfer centers that actively recruit students into a transfer program, monitor their progress at each step, provide assistance with academic problems, and work with

students to explore career and higher education options. "Thus, incentives and pro-active measures that bring services within reach of students and that enhance social and academic integration need to be developed." (Rendor, p158)

Within the American Indian community one very successful way of promoting transfer has been the development of Tribal colleges. These colleges are established on reservations and although they do not exclusively enroll American Indians, the majority of the entrants are American Indian. Tribally controlled community colleges play a very active role in the community. "One of the key reasons for the Tribal colleges success has been the belief and practice that students can remain Indian, can practice Tribal traditions and retain Tribal values and also be successful students." (Amiotte, p.2) Tribal colleges work very closely with local high schools recruiting students. Many also have effective 2+2 programs. Unfortunately, there is limited cooperation between Tribal colleges and four-year public state colleges and universities. Four-year public insititutions "must become a physical presence in the minority community by setting up linkages with minority community colleges, Tribal colleges, community based colleges. In places where there are no existing colleges they can set up centers where courses are offered; they can physically go to the reservation, hollow, ghetto, or barrio." (Amiotte, p.8) If transfer is going to be improved the four-year insititutions must be willing to establish workable articulation agreements with Tribal colleges.

The Urban Demonstration Model (UDM) was developed by the Center for Articulation and Transfer Opportunities at Cuyahoga Community College in 1986. UDM addresses three critical issues in community college student success: 1. "facilitate high school to college transition," 2. "improve student retention and academic achievement," 3. "facilitate two-year to four-year college transfer." (Ellison, p3).

The major elements of this model are curriculum improvements through articulation agreements, academic and student support services, the development of student information systems, active recruitment of a cadre of well prepared high school students through high school <--> community college cooperation and 2+2 programs, development of strong community college <--> community relations with parents, spouses, businesses and civic organizations, and a learning environment that "cultivates respect and mutually trusting relationships among students, teachers and administrators." (Ellison, p9)

SUMMARY

The above mentioned programs have six basic elements:

1. The need to improve the academic preparation of incoming students.
2. The need to educate the community and families of students in the costs and benefits of higher education.
3. The need to develop strong articulation agreements and inter-institutional programs with four-year institutions.
4. The need to provide academic, financial and counseling support

to students.

5. The need for strong, visible transfer centers.
6. The need to foster respect for the individual's culture and assist students as they try to bridge two worlds with the help of mentors.

CONCLUSION

Although we, as a nation, prize higher educational achievement, we rarely actively seek to promote it. We make it available; the rest is up to the individual. Due to a variety of circumstances, not the least of which is the apparent failure of our secondary school system to sufficiently educate most young Americans, a bachelor's degree is not realistically available to most students.

The community college system has been working toward this end for many years. They have established some very successful programs to promote retention and transfer of both specific minority groups and their general student population. However the community college system can not achieve their goals alone. No school system exists in a vacuum. Community colleges need the full cooperation of both local secondary schools and four-year institutions. All the support systems, the personal development and growth, the necessary conscienceness raising, and the academic successes will mean little if when a student arrives at the four-year institution he or she is told that his or her efforts will not be recognized.

Minority students, in particular, need to become comfortable

with their ethnic identity before they can temporarily don the coat of another culture which exists in most four-year institutions. It is only after a person is comfortable in his or her own skin, so to speak, that he or she realizes it is possible to wear or discard other coats as the environment calls for them. As Border colleges, Tribal colleges, and Historically Black colleges are showing, the community college is a very good place to develop this type of self confidence. With active cooperation and mutual respect from four-year institutions, community colleges will be able to assist far greater numbers of students in their goal of achieving a bachelor's degree. It is necessary for all institutions to set aside the often unintentionally patronizing notion of adoption and become partners in the education of American students.

We, as Americans, can no longer afford the political, economic or moral luxury of ignoring the progress or lack of progress that minority students make toward achieving recognizable academic status. CSCC, as well as other research organizations, has initiated the process of evaluation by developing a nationally recognizable definition by which to measure transfer. Many individual community colleges and community college organizations like the Border College Consortium and Tribal colleges have taken active roles in the development of adaptable models that promote retention and transfer of minority students and their classmates. It is now time to insist that these, and similar models be put into effect and that all institutions whether high schools, two-year colleges, or four-year colleges and universities be held

accountable to the public for the education of America's future leaders.

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